

Annex A

SUBJECT: Difference Between Soviet Responses to a Blockade and U. S. Measures of Force Against Cuba

1. Under blockade the Soviets would concentrate on political exploitation, especially in the UN. They might risk violent encounters in attempts to penetrate the blockade, but they would not resort to major force in the area of Cuba or forceful retaliation elsewhere, at least initially. If U. S. enforcement of the blockade involved use of force by the U. S., the Soviets might respond on an equivalent level, but would seek to avoid escalation.

2. In the case of U. S. use of force against Cuban territory, the likelihood of a Soviet response by force, either locally or for retaliation elsewhere, would be greater. (We are unable to estimate the precise degree of likelihood, but we do not wish to minimize the possibility of some Soviet response outside Cuba, particularly in areas such as Berlin where the Communists are capable of acting regardless of what happens in Cuba.) We believe that the Soviets are somewhat less likely to retaliate with military force in areas outside of Cuba in response to a speedy and effective all-out invasion than to other forms of U. S. military action.)

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3. In essence, the blockade situation places the Soviets under no immediate pressure to choose a response with force. They can thus hope to use political means to compel the U. S. to desist, and reserve a resort to force until the U. S. has actually used force. They would certainly estimate that the generally adverse reactions, even on the part of U. S. allies, to the U. S. blockade would offer an excellent opportunity to bring enormous pressures on the U. S. to desist. They could heighten these pressures by threatening retaliation in Berlin or actually undertaking major harassments there, and would probably do so at some stage.

~~It is believed~~
~~But in fact~~ a rapid occupation of Cuba would be more likely to make the Soviets pause in opening new theaters of conflict than limited action or action which drags out.